



# OXFORDSHIRE RACIAL EQUALITY COUNCIL

THE OLD COURT HOUSE, FLOYDS ROW, off ST ALDATE'S, OXFORD, OX1 1SS  
TEL: (01865) 791891 FAX: (01865) 726150

Nicola Harrison, Grants Officer  
Neighbourhood Renewal  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldates  
OXFORD OX1 1SS

Dear Nicky

Re: Review of Policies and Procedures for support for CVO Sector

With reference to the above document, we wish to make the following points:

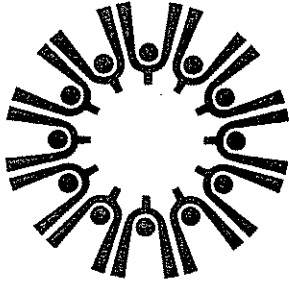
- i) We commend the new approach and welcome its conformity with the Oxon Compact Funding Code which we have been involved in developing.
- ii) We have been engaged with the work of the OVID Consortium through the GOSE Additional Support Programme and our work has a direct relationship with the infrastructure development plan (IDP) which focuses on better support services to voluntary organisations such as OREC and the small BME groups that are affiliated to us.
- iii) We are concerned about the proposal to top-slice the grants budget which has in the past, been the main source of funding for small VCS's. It is our view that this would affect the VCS more adversely than the Business Units which have a firmer base from which it operates.
- iv) The review, as with others in the Council, seem to create more jobs internally rather than attempt to draw existing posts together with a view to providing a more coherent service from the public point of view.
- v) We are concerned about the consultation process on the Prospectus and would like to know what strategies will be adopted to ensure that small, linguistically disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups can get their views heard. We would be pleased to assist with this process.

Thank you for sending us your review document which proposes quite a significant change from the way in which the Council has previously carried out its grant-making process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chinta Kallie'.

Chinta Kallie  
Chair  
cc. Franklin Smith - Director



# Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action

*Enabling a diverse voluntary and community sector to flourish*

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Nicky Harrison  
Oxford City Council

17 March 2006

Dear Nicky

## **Review of policies and procedures for support for the Community and Voluntary Sector**

On behalf of OCVA I would like to make the following comments about the document sent to us on 8 March. Please note that because of the deadline given I have not been able to consult with my trustees.

In broad terms we welcome the initiative taken by the Council to clarify and join up its support for the sector.

- We like the commitment to maintaining a flexible and mixed economy of grants and contracts.
- We agree with the concept of strategic targeting of funding to achieve defined outcomes.
- We are pleased to see the commitment to work within Compact principles - although the consultation period given for this paper is not particularly Compact compliant.
- We appreciate the heavy workload of the grants officer and recognise the need for additional administrative support.
- The proposal for an integrated support system certainly seems to address an issue that we have struggled with in relation to our Furniture Store, where the lease for the building is dealt with in isolation from the grant for running costs. A 'one stop shop' approach would definitely be helpful.

Our main reservations are (in no particular order):

- We disagree with the proposal to top-slice the grants budget to staff the support team within the Council because we do not want to see any reduction in the funding allocated to the VCS. We would like to see other options being explored. We are similarly concerned about the proposal to use grant funding to improve Council assets (buildings) and to pay Council staff (secondments).
- We are not sure that the message about wanting 5-7 year funding as reported from the consultation with the VCS last year is an accurate reflection of what was said, or of the way the Compact steering group is seeking to influence policy in this area. What we would like to see is three-year rolling contracts, not automatically

renewed, but subject to annual review so that an organisation always knows where it will be three years ahead (but is not guaranteed more than three years' funding at any time).

- We are concerned to see no explicit commitment to full cost recovery in the main document, although it does appear in the Appendix. This is the essential other side of the procurement coin.
- We are concerned by the very tight deadlines in the flow chart, particularly where there may be less than a month's window to apply for grants, or just over a month (including Christmas) to prepare potentially complex tenders.
- We appreciate the intention to include OCVA on the steering group to implement the plan. We are slightly concerned that this proposal was not put to us before it was included in the paper, not least because there will undoubtedly be conflict of interest issues for us to resolve if we accept the invitation.
- We are a little anxious that although the background papers make reference to the OVID/ChangeUp work, there is no clear reference to it in the main consultation paper. While we appreciate that lack of time and staff resources has been a factor, we regret that there has been no dialogue with the OVID consortium about this review, despite the extensive overlap between the two areas of work. We hope that a productive working relationship can now be put in place as the lead body status for OVID passes to OCVA.
- We would like to see a more explicit commitment in the paper to the value of *voluntary sector* infrastructure services. Our understanding is that the CVO support unit within the Council is not intended to provide capacity building and organisational development, yet effective delivery of frontline services will not happen without that support, which in our view sits best within the VCS itself. In the background papers there is a welcome reference to Council support for OVID and for capacity building the sector. However, infrastructure support is a difficult concept because its outcomes are often intangible and so there is a danger that if the new schemes are totally focussed on frontline service themes, it may be difficult to make the case for second tier services.

I hope these comments are helpful and would be happy to follow them up with further discussion.

With kind regards

Alison Baxter  
Chief Executive



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Oxfordshire VCS Infrastructure Development

20 March 2006

Oliver de Soissons  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldate's Chambers  
109-113 St Aldate's  
Oxford OX1 1DS

Dear Oliver,

**CITY COUNCIL REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR SUPPORT FOR THE  
COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

The OVID Consortium is a group of interested voluntary and community organisations and local authority partners who have got together to respond to the Government's ChangeUp initiative to promote improvements to CVO infrastructure support. ChangeUp funding has been available to enable county-wide consortia to look at the range and quality of infrastructure services that are currently provided by both voluntary and statutory agencies, in order to support CVS organisations in their area. Consortia are required to consider whether these services need to be expanded or improved, in the light of local Community and Voluntary Organisations' (CVO) needs, and if a need to expand or improve is identified, to produce a forward plan for achieving this (an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP)).

This is the work that the OVID Consortium has been carrying out in Oxfordshire during 2005/06 and we are about to finalise our IDP after detailed consultation with voluntary and statutory stakeholders. We have welcomed the City Council's representation on the OVID Consortium and Steering Group.

The Consortium was naturally interested to learn of the City Council's review of policies and procedures for their own support for the community and voluntary sector and have the following comments on your proposals.

1. We commend the overall approach and welcome its conformity with the Oxfordshire Compact Funding Code.
2. We commend the Council's review of internal processes but would welcome more liaison and discussion with the OVID Consortium about how support for CVOs should best be delivered.
3. The issue of how CVOs are best supported by well co-ordinated statutory and voluntary infrastructure services is OVID's prime focus. OVID's work has included opportunities for statutory authorities in membership of the Consortium to work together to look at this issue.

The proposals arising from the Council's review fall directly within this sphere of interest and have a direct relationship to the contents of the OVID Consortium's infrastructure development plan (IDP). We are sure that as an OVID Consortium member the Council

would agree that it would not be sensible for such a welcome new initiative to be developed independently of the OVID IDP proposals and of on-going joint-working among statutory authorities. We would welcome an early opportunity to discuss the proposals with the Council.

We hope that the opportunity will be taken to look at how to deal effectively with CVO funding requirements that cross authority boundaries.

4. We welcome the emphasis on front-line outcomes as the desired result of supporting CVO activity. However, we are concerned that there is no reference to the role of infrastructure services delivered through the voluntary sector in helping CVOs to achieve these outcomes. The OVID Consortium feels strongly that both the statutory and voluntary sector have a valuable and complementary role in providing infrastructure support to front-line organisations.
5. We note that it is proposed to provide additional resources for the CVO support unit by top-slicing the grants budget. We would like to discuss this with you further and see whether other options could be considered.
6. We wonder whether it would not be more productive and cost-effective to draw together existing work on CVO support being done by different officers within the Council rather than create new posts.
7. We welcome the intention to consult widely on:
  - o the Prospectus of potential outcomes and outputs
  - o delivery methods for each Area and Theme, and
  - o criteria for innovation and emergency funding.

We would like to have more information on how the Council proposes that this consultation would be carried out. We would be happy to contribute ideas and practical assistance in order to help to achieve wide and positive CVO involvement.

Thank you for coming to our Steering Group meeting on 15 March to share information and views. We look forward to discussing these issues with you and your Council further.

Yours sincerely,

Meryl Smith  
Lead Officer on behalf of Consortium

Response to Review of Policies and Procedures for  
Support for the Community and Voluntary Sector

By the Oxfordshire Community Foundation

1. Procurement versus grants

My first reaction on reading the Review of Policies and Procedures for support for the Community and Voluntary Sector is that I cannot imagine that the consultation with the voluntary sector has contributed to this document at all. If anything, the new style of programme is going to increase the workload of applicant CVOs in applying, generate more effort for monitoring and diminish the funds available!

In the "Funding and Procurement Compact Code of Good Practice" (produced by the Home Office), the opening statement declares:

*"Both Government and the voluntary and community sector share a vision of a fair society, with strong communities and opportunity for everyone. The Government recognises that the voluntary and community sector can make a significant contribution to this vision. Many voluntary and community organizations enter into a financial relationship with Government to deliver outcomes on its behalf, either through grant funding or by supplying services purchased through public procurement."*

So, there is a clear distinction between grant funding and public procurement referred to in the National Compact, and yet the local interpretation in the Review document seems to have amalgamated both together into procurement which will only add to the workload of the Grants Manager and any VCO applying for support.

There is a common confusion (increasingly with statutory bodies) between **contracts** and **grants**. Contracts are for work the Council is required to perform or have decided to perform; grants are for work that complements and augments work the Council is required to perform. The confusion arises when the same charity is awarded a contract and applies for additional funding. As an example, Reading Quest may be awarded a contract to deliver support to dyslexic children through a contract with the County's Education Department; but they may wish also to work with children who struggle to read but are not statemented and for this they would apply for a grant.

Charities are not supposed to perform work that the government is obliged to deliver (Charities Act 1991), but the lines have been blurred where the work that charities perform have shown better results than Council staffed services and this has led to a flurry of contracts between CVOs and local authorities.

The first instance where this confusion is obvious is right at the beginning of the Review Document, where in setting the scene, the following statement is made as a given:

*"Ensure grants that in effect buy services take into account the new procurement strategy..." (Background point 6)*

I recognise that the new procurement system should apply to both private and voluntary sector organizations, but **the grants programme is not procurement**. I applaud the City Council for wishing to make the objectives of the grants programme clearer to applicants and more in line with the Council objectives to reassure local council tax

payers, but I do not see any reason why, for example, there is a need for "Flexibility at the Prospectus stage to consider alternatives" (table 1, item 10).

## 2. Infrastructure support

I note with disappointment that there is no reference to the OVID plan to support the development of the VCS in Oxford. Whilst the Review illustrates how important an understanding of the local sector is ("Lack of analysis of the current CVO and Service delivery makes it difficult to respond to government initiatives and secure additional funding" Where we are now point 13), the solution is to provide more work for the Business Unit and to build up the Grants Team, rather than invest in work already proposed and signed up to by Oxford City Council's inclusion on the Steering Committee who are recommending these proposals.

## 3. Other Funders

Within the position statement, item 6 refers to co-ordinating support with other funders, to maximise impact. The Oxfordshire Community Foundation is a local charitable trust, currently distributing around £400,000 across the county. We have worked with the City Council Grants Manager in the past, but Data Protection issues prevent any meaningful exchange of information before decision-making and exchange of information after decisions are made will not deal with the concern over double-funding.

## 4. The proposed process

I note again with disappointment that the process suggested still doesn't allow for widespread promotion of the grants programme: the adverts in late October and a deadline in November. Information takes a while to disseminate and we know from our own experience that groups regularly take three to four months between receiving an application form and submitting the form. If the intention is to ensure that all possible groups able to deliver the desired outcomes are in a position to apply, then promotion of the grants programme needs to start in April with a November deadline. Otherwise, the only groups that will hear of the fund will be those already tapped into the City Council's networks and that will not create the desired outcome of alternatives.

## 5. Co-ordination

I was concerned with the phrase "some organisations are over funded, other lose out" (Appendix Table 1 item 5) and that the counterpoint being to achieve "good value for money". I am surprised to hear that the City Council believe that there are any CVOs who are luxuriating in funding. I believe that co-ordination between different departments will be of value to add value to the work funded through the grants programme, but not if it means less support is given overall.

## 6. Dialogue

I am concerned about the phrase "the City Council frequently ends up funding existing buildings and organisations" as being a negative point. As the Oxfordshire and National Compacts both refer to the principle of "full cost recovery", why should Oxford City Council be concerned that some of their grants support overhead costs?

Overall, the Review seems not to be in the interests of the Community and Voluntary Sector, but rather to increase the monitoring and auditing requirements of the City Council which will decrease the funding available to local groups and decrease their impact on solving local problems.

## DeSOISSONS Oliver

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**From:** geron [geron@ofvm.org]  
**Sent:** 16 March 2006 12:20  
**To:** DeSOISSONS Oliver  
**Subject:** Response to CVO report from geron

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Red

Hi Oliver

I read your CVO report which is interesting and I think long overdue. My main concern is the future for partner organisations like ourselves. There seems to be little mention of 3 year contracts and the really important security that those agreements offer for stability, development and growth and ultimately value for money. I'm also concerned about how a tendering for services might work.

Just a couple of thoughts

Hope you are well - have you moved from Shotover now? Anyway it would be good to have a chat sometime All the best Geron

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